



Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative

Family Support Work Group - November 09, 2004

Members Present: James R. Abson, Sherrill Archer, Penny Farrar, Florene Gaston, Jacqueline (Jackie) Gorton, Deanna Howell, Florine Johnson, Ginny Kurrus, Kathie Molina, Kenneth Myers, Sorita Rusher, Cristy Sellers, Susan Underwood, Paula C. Watson, Lorie Williams, and Nancy Yarbrough. **Also attending,** Barbara Gilkey representing the Parent Education Work Group. **Regrets:** Gwen Paul and Teri Patrick.

Minutes from the meeting of October 12, 2004, were reviewed and approved without changes. Jackie

Agenda Item #1: Tiered Quality Sheet from Early Care and Education

Discussion: Jackie briefly discussed the previous October meetings of other work groups resulting in the discussion of the Arkansas Components for a Tiered Quality Strategy and the involvement of the Family Support Group. The tiered quality sheet related to the work of the Early Care and Education Work Group was distributed and further discussed.

Result: It was pointed out by Jackie that Page 2, under the "Parent/Family/ Community (Collab.)" section, "Resources for Family Support," would involve the assistance of the Family Support Work Group to complete. A dual-purpose toolkit will help in this structure.

Agenda Items #2: Head Start Presentation - Florine Johnson

Discussion: Florine Johnson serves as the Family Services Coordinator, Head Start Child & Family Services, Inc. for Crawford and Sebastian Counties. She began her presentation in the same way that she begins a presentation with parents—using an ice breaker. This is a way to put parents at ease and begin to involve in the process as well as give her and other leaders an opportunity to observe the parents.

Parents are the most important teachers for children in the home. Head Start has a very comprehensive plan involving parents in its program. This plan has health, including mental health, and educational aspects for the family. They strive to encourage parents to be involved in the child's life. Children benefit when parents know what is happening in their child's education. This habit is usually maintained through the rest of the child's educational life.

How a parent is treated is important. Head Start looks at where the parents are. There is a need to

know what happened to that parent before they came in the door: culture, background, etc. Self-esteem is important. Head Start has a "fatherhood" program.

Recruitment is the first contact with parents. It is your first impression; it may be last impression they have of you. The application is completed by the provider along with the parent (since some parents can't read very well). The family history is very thick when completed. The parents just want the child in the program so they go along with this part of the process. Parents are never left to complete the application by themselves; this sets up a rapport with the family.

Orientation is next. They do not talk "at" parents. It is parent friendly. The teacher contact is very important. Every parent is given a parent handbook. This is part of the orientation. They are hoping to put in a video soon. Some centers are already doing.

Agenda Item #2: Head Start Presentation – Florine Johnson

Discussion: Most Head Starts have a handbook. As part of the orientation, some things in the handbook they go over with the family, such as days open and closed. The handbook includes what to do about complaints, goals, education, and philosophy.

Core pieces are from the national Head Start. Performance standards are available from the national offices. Some information is out of the policy manual. Each local program has the flexibility to take and apply information to meet their local needs.

Each parent is given a calendar. One page calendar each month. Parents meet once a month. They decide the time after the September meeting. Parents have a voice. They must have a voice. Parents with no voice disappear.

Family/Staff Partnership Agreement. The word, goal, was changed to Dreams. They break “dreams” down in small pieces. One thing they tell parents is to ask about each child’s day in school.

Must have a parent bulletin board in the center to include pictures of families, notices, etc.

At the committee meetings, they elect officers. There is a Policy Council. Decisions are made about the Head Start Program by this Council, including the option to approve staff. It is the board for the Head Start program.

There is a Health Advisory Committee, Education Committee, and Social Concerns Committee and other committee as locally determined. Minutes are sent out to parents of the monthly meetings.

The best participation by parents is in the orientation. Then there is a slack off. Each day center must do what they can to encourage parent participation. Some day centers hold meetings at night, or do crafts to include parents and the children or have door prizes and food. Some parents want the time only for themselves without the children—sometimes it is the only time they have for themselves. One center is doing a parent support group at lunch. One centers does a multi-cultural pot luck each meeting.

One center sponsored a Parent Training Conference and gave a certificate for attendance. They sponsored activities for the children. They serve breakfast and lunch and gave door prizes. Parents were given the opportunity to visit and borrow from the resource center

Barriers that prevent parent involvement:

- Working in day time, they are not going to come back at night.
- Teachers are not motivating parents to come.
- If meetings are held in the evening, the teachers must come back and do childcare for the children.

Teachers must be motivated also. Parents must be encouraged to read notices sent out from the Central Office. Teachers must talk with parents about attending meetings. Find ways of motivating staff and parents. Trying to get Dads involved is difficult.

Make sure teachers are “talking” with parents. Have strong teacher/staff training. Classroom teachers are required to do two in-home visits each year. Having a Family Service Workers is important, too. Anything that a parent does with a child is parent involvement, but it must be documented.

Sometimes you can get a motivated parent to talk with other parents. To do this, you must have good rapport with parents.

When Head Start works with other organizations, the information is sent to the parents.

During home visits, the teachers talk about strengths and needs of the family.

RESULT: Ms. Johnson led the group through an overview of the Head Start processes of recruitment, application- family intake, orientation, child's classroom, parent committees, identifying and overcoming barriers, providing family friendly materials, male involvement, healthy relationships/healthy marriage,

Florine Johnson was invited to become a member of the Family Support Work Group.

Agenda Item #3: Toolkit

Discussion: Barbara Gilkey talked about the toolkit planned by the Parent Education group. They are interested in way the two groups can work together. Jackie and Kara Cooper, representing the Medical Home Work Group participated in a conference call in October with the Parent Education Work Group.

Mention was made of a project that UALR is working on with some parents involving family mapping. This project is looking at what family mapping should have in it. Purpose of grant is to provide parameters. It was noted that Martha would like to bring it to fruition was part of the toolkit. This is not a finished project.

Result: Two or three people from each Work Group will be asked to form a sub-committee to meet together to put an outline/set parameters/structure to the toolkit of what each group wants in or thinks should be part of the toolkit and start from there. The sub-committee needs to meet soon.

Volunteers representing Family Support are: Sherrill Archer, Jacqueline Gorton, and Florine Johnson, and Ginny Kurrus.

TASKS: Paula with Jackie's help was asked to contact the other four work groups through their chairpersons related to designating persons for the sub-committee for the toolkit. This group will plan concrete parameters for the toolkit.

Agenda Item #4: PTA Report - Ginny Kurrus

Discussion: Ginny noted that every public school is required to have a Parent Involvement Plan. The PTA looks at Parent Involvement—

- 1) Regular two-way communications is most important.
- 2) Parenting skills supported/promoted.
- 3) Parents play an integral role in student planning.
- 4) Volunteers are welcome in the classroom (support role).
- 5) Parents are involved in school decision making and advocacy.
- 6) Collaboration with community—many businesses want to support education. Make them feel part of the school.

Results: Ginny discussed areas needed to ensure successful family involvement:

- Parents play an integrated role.
- Help schools overcome any barriers to ACT 603.
- Parent volunteering in the classroom/school.
- Parents involved in school and advocacy process
- Collaboration with the community/businesses, beyond the norm.

Agenda Items #5: Miscellaneous - Grant for Pilot Project

Discussion: Sherrill related information that Martha Reeder recently submitted a completed application and composite partner responses for the Strengthening Families State Pilot Project. This is an opportunity for a cooperative project with the Division of Children and Family Services to help prevent abuse and neglect for children. Only three states will be chosen. The major value of the application for the grant is that it will provide technical assistance to help strengthen family involvement. It also will provide resources for persons trying to get family involvement.

Result: Arkansas was chosen as one of seven states that the Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education Initiative has invited to Albuquerque December 1-3, 2004, for further discussion with the national network of technical assistance providers for this initiative. After this meeting end, three states will be chosen for the pilot project.

Agenda Items #5: Miscellaneous, Continued – Organizational Inventory

Discussion: Group members discussed the need to have a clear organizational chart identifying all of the initiatives, projects, and programs--their role in family involvement.

Result: Sherrill Archer volunteered to head the organizational piece.

TASKS: Sherrill Archer was asked to pull together an inventory of all components of parent resources. There needs to be a couple of statements about each group to know their role in family involvement.

Agenda Item #6: Adjournment – Next Meeting Date

Discussion: Following discussion of all agenda items and determination of the next meeting date, the meeting was adjourned.

Result: Next meeting date: December 14, 2004, 9 – 11 a.m. Agenda items—

- Presentation/discussion from Sherrill Archer and the organizational mapping of AR initiatives and projects.
- Revisit and update the “short-term outcomes” and “activities.”
- Other avenues – to address and support the “short-term outcomes” in order to achieve the one identified long-term outcome.
- Identify “short-term outcomes” forming subcommittee... 1) sub-committee to identify those participants on the ARMIS system and any missing agencies/organizations; what the system is and can offer to Family Support Work Group; what is need, ARMIS missing pieces, how do we get there.
- Revisit the strengths each Family Support committee member brings to the group and how these roles will be utilized to obtain the long-term outcome.